

HB 418

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Bill Harris. I represent HD 30. HD 30 includes all of Petroleum and Garfield Counties and a large part of Fergus and McCone counties. Today, I present to you HB 418 [read bill].

The intention of this bill is to more fairly share a small number of licenses with nonresident hunters.

Some sporting groups and statewide and out of state conservation groups working with the Fish, Wildlife and Parks commission have successfully reduced nonresident hunting in Montana.

The unintended consequences have been enormous:

There have been closures of private land holdings as a result of attempts to minimize private property rights.

There is less money available for leasing block management lands.

Many businesses in small towns have lost from 30% to 40% of their annual income that came from nonresident hunters.

Ranchers and local outfitters, sometimes one in the same, have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars of income.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks has also lost a very large part of their licensing revenue, leaving them no alternative but to raise resident licenses. The increase will be quite significant, resulting in fewer hunters participating.

At present, the law allows up to 10%. Actually only 6% to 7% are normally drawn. This bill increases the allowable number of nonresidents to 15%. If the same number are drawn as before, it should increase the nonresidents accordingly.

For the sake of the small towns and communities, and the resident hunter that can depend on his or her first choice in a drawing, resulting in a license, please pass this bill.

DATE 3/5/2013

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